BIZARRE BEYOND BELIEF

ARTS + CULTURE MAGAZINE

Issue #12

Winnie Truong

JUSTIN BOWER | RUBIN415

RUSTO | POSER | RAOS

CROWDED KINGDOM | THIS IS NOT A TOY

BEN FROST

BIZARRE BEYOND BELIEF

ARTS x CULTURE x MAGAZINE

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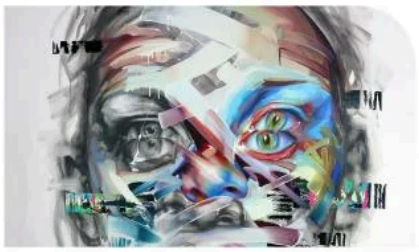

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Dedicated to the brilliant, beautiful and bizarre. Whimsical tales, visuals and various odds and ends about obscure and misunderstood sub-cultures.

RUBIN
NELIO
Bat
Haus
WARNING

THIS CAR
ESS HEIGHT

RAOS

Raos is one of those writers that does everything and does it well. From painting walls to throw-ups, from characters to trains, Raos paints with authority. On top of that, the man can sit down and create work for galleries and shows that anyone would be lucky to own.

BizarreBeyondBelief: When was your first interaction with graffiti and what captivated you about the craft?

RAOS: I discovered graffiti only visually when I was younger living in mexico and it wasn't until I was 18 when I did my first piece and it was horrible! For the most part it was about having fun, but also the act of doing something I wasn't supposed to be doing. It has since become more about that... I think?

BBB: What are the main aspects of graffiti that you would say differentiate it from other artistic fields?

RAOS: Graffiti isn't art right? Ha ha, I'm just being facetious! I would say that graffiti is more immediate but less permanent. It's a lot more physically and mentally demanding than sitting in your studio (or in my case studio apartment) working with out any worry of time or the law. Besides that, for me I'm figuring out how to get the same feeling out of both so they're one in the same.

BBB: Graffiti composes itself of many elements (bombing, trains, walls), if you could only paint one for the rest of your career, which one would it be and why?

RAOS: Although I enjoy all surfaces and mediums I would have to say if I had to choose one it would be, walls. The idea of painting trains and them moving around is great, but I have come to learn that for my specific goals that staying on the tracks limits me on the progression that I seek. If I had the opportunity to paint walls for the rest of my life it would give me the freedom and control of my materials as well

as a broader audience (for now I will continue doing all of them).

BBB: Even though graffiti is gaining more acceptance in popular culture, do you think it will ever be as accepted as traditional art forms?

RAOS: There really isn't a choice, it is of our time, and I am happy to be making my contribution!

BBB: How did growing up in Mexico City influence your artistic practice?

RAOS: Living in Mexico City was the best years of my childhood and also where I discovered graffiti. Being there as a young kid you really soak in everything around you I was extremely influenced by all the culture and the way that people live their lives from day to day. It wasn't until years later that I started doing art and I decided to pick it up right where it began. Explaining my choice in colours and stylistic line quality. I can keep going on and on but we will leave it at that .

BBB: Relocating to Los Angeles is something many artists dream for, do you believe this is a perfect city to further one's career?

RAOS: I have to first say that furthering one's career is up to oneself

SECURITY
DEVICE
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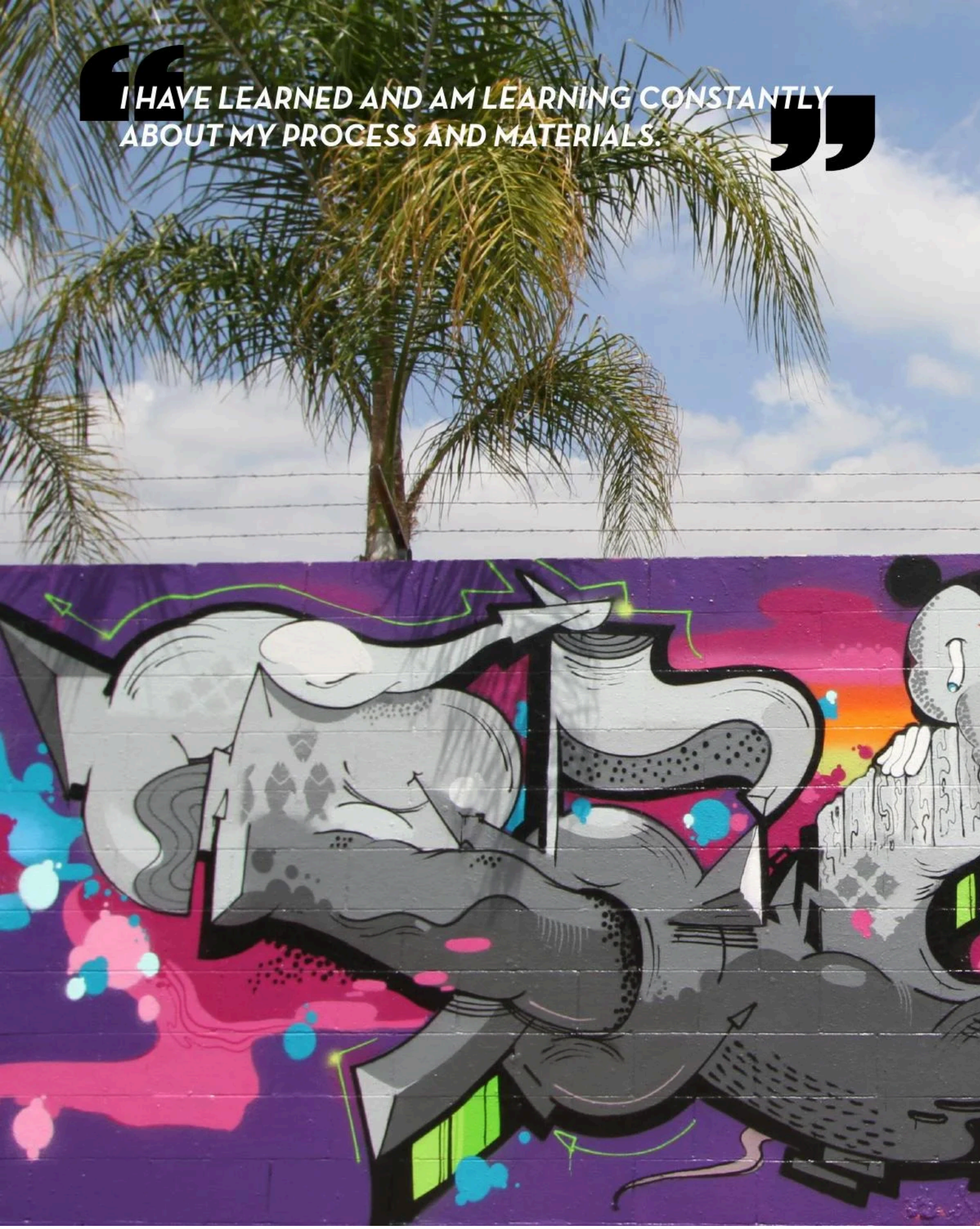
“I HAVE LEARNED AND AM LEARNING CONSTANTLY ABOUT MY PROCESS AND MATERIALS.”

KATE

no matter where you live. For me it was a dream to move to Los Angeles. Although I had many people at the time telling me there was nothing going on in Los Angeles. I believe there is tons of opportunity here and most of all tons of culture and driven individuals. Like any major city I think, Los Angeles is a great place to establish yourself and build a good career.

BBB: How does it compare to other cities you have traveled to?

RAOS: This is a very bias opinion but it doesn't really compare, Los Angeles is home. It's nice to go visit but I have found even when being across the world and coming back to Los Angeles there is nothing like it.

BBB: Which city (outside of LA), would you say is your favorite city to paint and chill in?

RAOS: In a remote location with my brother Swear.

BBB: You're not only a graffiti artist but a fine artist as well, how does you approach differ from indoor to outdoor?

RAOS: If you would have asked this question four years ago I would of been able to pinpoint exactly what I do and don't do when I am painting canvases or graffiti. Since you are asking the question now, unless I am tagging or doing a throw-up everything else takes a similar approach. I have been bridging my art and graffiti style over the last few years so it is more fluid and consistent. It has always been important to me not separate the audience from the street and the gallery. I treat every thing from a tag to

a mural as tools each perform different task but all are a direct extension of me.

BBB: Do you find there are difficulties adapting to the scale of the material (i.e. wall vs. canvas)?

RAOS: Not as much as before, though I am by no means fully developed. There are things that still take some getting used to. I have learned and am learning constantly about my process and materials.

BBB: Who is your favourite artist (or artists) to paint and/or collaborate with?

RAOS: No specific favourites. I enjoy working with people that have a passion for what they're doing, while having a good time. Both in and out of the graffiti/art scene.

BBB: Are there any new projects, events or general information that our readers should be on the lookout for in the future from Raos?

I have a show coming up May 17th at the GCS gallery in Santa Ana. Lots of new work they can preview on my Instagram (@raossance) and website www.theraossance.com. Otherwise keep your eyes open on the streets.

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KRISTOPHER RAOS

THE RAOSSANCE

DON'T LOOK, DON'T TOUCH

MAY 17TH OPENING NIGHT
7PM-10PM

GCS GALLERY
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SANTA ANA,CA 92701

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282
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PULL DOOR TIGHT
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ANSER
CROWDED KINGDOM

As you well know, ANSER is a great friend of BBB and he was featured in our most recent issue. Last month he had a show at the #Hashtag Gallery in Toronto. The show was an unbelievable hit, with people lining up out the door to get a peek at his work and (if they were lucky enough) to scoop up an original piece. But we won't bore you with a long intro and we'll let our photos & review of the show do the rest of the talking.

Toronto has been graced over and over with the iconic Anser face since 2009 - now dubbed "Toronto's Writer." Anser's latest solo exhibit at #Hashtag Gallery was an impressive display of the writers talent. Almost every piece was sold at the rowdy opening, which was jam-packed including a 15 minute wait time in the Toronto cold. Part of the allure of graffiti is the myth and mystery behind the artist. The artist, even outside of graffiti's urban roots, has been seen as a rebellious anti-hero throughout history, "Self-consciously bohemian, rebellious and high-risk, and their art heroic and revolutionary. The myth still colours the popular view of the artist, as an outsider removed from the concerns of ordinary people, living a life in defiance of convention" (noted by art critic Michael Wilson when speaking about 19th century painters). The ability to disguise oneself, sneak out into the night and leave their artistic mark on surfaces across the city is often romanticized in the exhibitions of graffiti artists. The anti-hero of Anser is seen in his fans, some guests even brought 'gifts' (including a loaf of bread) to thank Anser for their consistent and beautiful work. The portraits around the city are familiar to patrons, not invasive enough to bother those who pine against graffiti, but impressive enough to keep Anser's long-earned title. Almost every single piece was sold, with a very dramatic opening reception. Speaking with co-owners Johnny and Graeme, the amount of time and work that went into these pieces is undoubtedly impressive. The artist is extremely happy with his reception from the city, and the gallery hasn't been empty since it's opening. A popular body of work featured were the hand cast, sculpted and painted resin figures that gave Anser's face life in 3D, each work was $300 due to the laborious time spent by LAIRD who hand-dyed each resin pour, crafted the moulds and buffed the figures to matte or gloss, then sent to Anser to paint by hand.

Anser has been painting Toronto since 2009, with a recognizable sharp-angled face peering around corners and filling in old brick. The fame of a graffiti artist can make them a messiah to other writers. With the crew/cult nature to graffiti, which often presents a hierarchy of rolls amongst writers, a writer that can prevail on their own successfully can easily be praised or punished. Other than monetary value, Anser gained recognition from those who may not have ventured into urban art, and established himself as an "artist". Frankly the opinion of others clearly hasn't phased Anser, with criticisms knighting him a one-trick pony, easily countered by the affect the face's repetition has had on a public space. The exhibit itself was a typical white cube, with only one black wall to highlight a transparent work. Though the art was produced by a rather unconventional artist, the curation spoke rather quietly. #Hashtag Gallery is a small, narrow space ideal for wall mounted works, and is one floor, featuring a charming outdoor space. Anser created the iconic face over and over in different mediums and with different tools - but lacking the intervention expected by an artist of outmoded forms. I personally loved the neon piece that hung in the window, and would have enjoyed a larger intervention painted on the gallery floor or walls. The show's highlight was the use of medium as canvas, an impressive feat, old bricks were gathered from historic houses being torn down in Toronto and re-mounted as the perfect, clean wall. Plexi-glass, wood blocks, paper and canvas were all used to give Anser new dimension. Whether the curator or artist chose to remain relatively mundane in display is not known, but because of Anser's incredible notoriety amongst other graffiti writers and fans, #Hashtag gallery is now fully booked with shows until September.

The moral of the exhibited graffiti artist story is keep your title high and keep your fans close. High turn-out to any show is recognition enough, let alone being featured in online publications and hundreds of Facebook shares. In this exchange the gallery gains cultural relevance and the artist gains opportunity. The art world is moving online, so it is undoubtedly refreshing to walk into a gallery and experience impressive work first-hand, but equally refreshing to find a piece on your walk home. Anser continues to be a public figure of Toronto's streets, now heightened to new levels of notoriety, we hope to see more and more of the mysterious face on Toronto's streets.

[Photopgraphy & words by: Rachelle Sabourin]

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MORE!
FUNNY
cartoons
HOME
LAUGHTER
SOLVES
Depression

POSER [ABM]

Poser is definitely one of the most versatile artists painting in Toronto. Hailing from Ottawa originally, you wouldn't even suspect it considering the work he's put in. From beautifying the urban landscape to painting some truly rugged spots. We're extremely proud to have him in this issue.

BizarreBeyondBelief: When was your first encounter with the graffiti world and what fascinated you about it?

POSER: My first experience with graffiti was in grade 8. I had recently moved to a new neighbourhood in Ottawa. I had been spending most of my days exploring it by bike and happened to stumble across a local tunnel painted by a variety of writers from my area and downtown. I remember spending about an hour studying each piece and the next day coming back for photos. I later mentioned it to a few of my friends at school and one who was a skater mentioned another tunnel in a different area of my neighbourhood that was full of pieces. I was suddenly drawn to the idea that there were hidden spots filled with what I considered amazing artwork hiding right under my very nose. I spent the next few days hunting out the second spot and when I found it I remember being utterly fascinated. It was the first time I had ever seen full-blown pieces and it was unlike any art I had ever viewed before. I immediately had an urge to find more and learn everything I could about it. I had always been interested in art but I had never seen anything like graffiti and it drew me in and hooked me.

BBB: At what age did you begin your painting career and what led you to take it more seriously?

POSER: I was always interested in art growing up, constantly doodling cartoons or characters and animals, but never really applied my skills to large scale or fully-produced works. In grade eight I began tagging around my neighbourhood with a few friends, armed with sharpie magnums, but it wasn't until the next year that I finally put a can to a wall for anything more than a tag. By that time, graffiti had a hold on me and I ended up running into some trouble after doing a daytime piece on a local building. I stopped painting for about three whole days and then started back in with a fervour, I think it was then that I started taking it seriously, I realized I wasn't going to or be able to stop so if I was going to paint, I might as well do

it well and fully commit to it. Later that year I did my first poser piece and the rest is history.

BBB: Your signature character is a menacing rabbit, what is it about this imagery that led you to attribute it to your graffiti alias?

POSER: I was always interested in characters growing up and experimented with a wide variety of different animals. While painting I started sketching and drawing bears and pandas quite a bit, I loved the power and energy behind them and the heavy weighted lines that you could pull off. I worked my way over to pandas and started painting them as the heavy black lines and shapes were fun to experiment with and the graphic element of a black and white character worked well with my style around that time. Over time the panda slowly turned into a more dog-like character without the hooded lines and solid ears, and slowly evolved into rabbit. From that I elongated the ears into a more expressive shape and changed the eyes to give it a bit of an excited expression. As I enjoyed the evolution and progression of the rabbit-bear animal I had the most fun with it so it turned into a moniker organically. As I had the most fun with the evolution and progression of the rabbit-bear, it turned into a moniker organically.

BBB: Can you describe what the rabbit signifies to you as an artist?

POSER: My moniker, to me, signifies the joy of furthering yourself as an artist and furthering your style. As the character has evolved/changed, my

style has evolved and changed over time.

BBB Being originally from Ottawa, we know the buff there is quite hard, how did this affect the way you strategized painting?

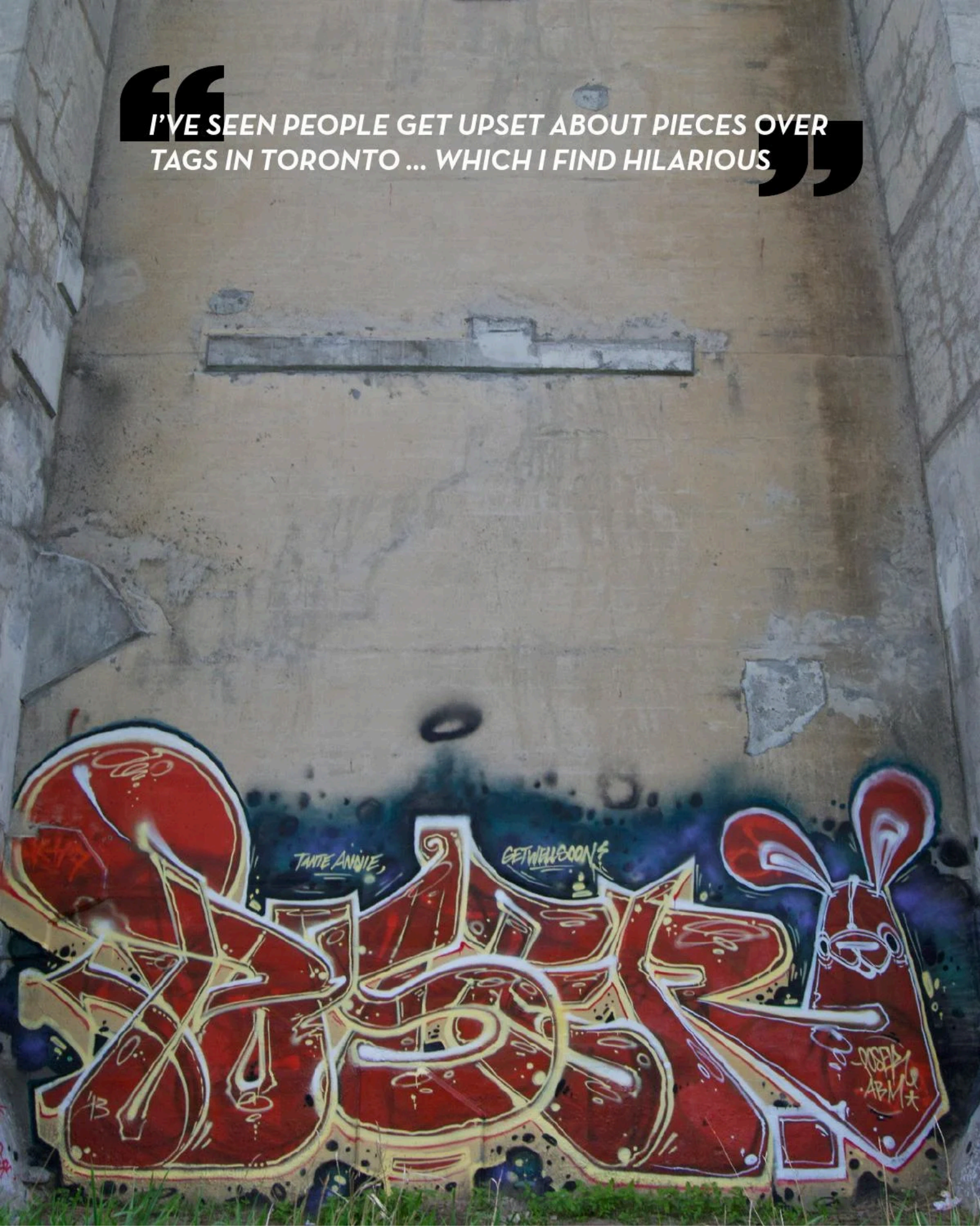
POSER: Coming from Ottawa, it definitely teaches you to paint for the experience and the photo unless you aim for extremely unique and hard to reach locations away from the usually buffed areas. Either that or you just paint hard and produce huge amounts as the buff won't be able to catch everything. Either way, it teaches you to not get attached to your pieces, whether they last or not, which I definitely think is a useful attribute for a writer in any city.

BBB: The graffiti community there is far smaller than other Canadian cities, did this play positive or negative roles in your development?

POSER: It was a tight community that certainly expected a high level of work from newcomers in order to be acknowledged by their peers.
I would definitely say it played a positive role, the good and the bad, as it definitely intensified my lack of respect towards clique mentalities. The truly genuine people made their presence known and influenced me quite a bit. I had the luck of meeting some of my artistic idols early on and had the honour of, early on in my career, learning from and painting with some writers that I still think have unbelievably unique styles. It was incredible to meet everyone involved in Ottawa's scene, unfortunate to receive some of the reactions that I received, but I definitely learned more than I had ever hoped to learn from the entire experience. I wouldn't take any of it back; gotta take the bad with the good, as they say.

BBB: You've painted in many different Canadian cities, how do others compare to your native Ottawa?

POSER: Ottawa's scene is very tight, and every wall within the city limits is very hotly contested over. Walls are claimed by crews and it's hard to find a virgin wall without a vehicle, the buff keeps everything difficult to paint and mostly grey these days but it was nice to grow up and experience what downtown was like shortly before the buff kicked in. There were some awe-inspiring spots and pieces to wow people like myself. You definitely have to work to find spots, let alone spots that will run, or you have to be okay with your pieces not lasting very long - it is certainly a city that teaches you not to slack.
Toronto is so spread out and sprawling that graffiti can flourish, buff or not. It's unimaginable to me that I can walk downtown and with a short climb and a little imagination, find virgin


I'VE SEEN PEOPLE GET UPSET ABOUT PIECES OVER TAGS IN TORONTO ... WHICH I FIND HILARIOUS
TANTE ANNIE
GETWELLSOON

beautiful rooftops on almost every block. Luckily Rob Ford's buff attempt was so poorly organized and applied that it hardly changed a thing. The town has more spots than the current graph output can handle and it's nice to be able to have some elbow room. In Ottawa, if you cover someone, it's mostly space-related. In Toronto, if you cover someone, it's often considered beef. I've seen people get upset about pieces over tags in Toronto (and not super old or classic tags either) which I find hilarious. Toronto has an interesting scene that is definitely more divided but it does have some creative and inspiring people working in the community.
Montreal is awesome. I have only painted there twice on very short trips and I can't wait to visit again for a solid spraycation. The whole scene (city/graff) seems to be a party and a half. I love the energy in that town. In my opinion, it's Canada's graffiti mecca. Vancouver unfortunately has a very heavy buff. It seems Ottawa and Vancouver are competing to see who can have the cleanest city. They have some absolutely incredible writers and I've only had the chance to paint there once, so I definitely can't speak with authority on the scene. I would love to travel there to paint trains or some bridge/wilderness spots. It's a jungle out there in the summer and I'd love to paint along the coast. I love the city's style and I think it is fairly looked-over/slept on Canada-wise. There are a lot of killer writers out there.

Small town graffiti is some of my favourite work to do as well. It's great to see the reaction and the people are so open to graffiti, without preconceived notions about it being a method of 'vandalism'. To them, it's brand new and exciting and the reactions are worth every piece. I have had the luck of painting a few times in Northern Ontario and the Caribbean - both experiences have been incredibly positive and enjoyable.

BBB: Furthermore, how do you feel about painting abroad versus in your home country?

POSER: Painting abroad is always a new experience, it's great to paint places that have never experienced graffiti before, everyone has a thousand questions and no inhibitions, it's a brand new experience all around. Painting in North America is a different experience entirely if you're painting in a major city but small towns can bring a similar experience to the international work. Though working with stock tips and completely new paint is always interesting and challenging. It's always interesting trying to find paint abroad, I never bring any of my own and it makes the pieces feel as new and different as the location.

BBB: Your body of work also consists of drawings and painting outside graffiti, do you feel it's imperative to have a graffiti aesthetic in your fine art work?

POSER: I love the energy that graffiti has and I always end up integrating that into my fine art work in some way, whether through colour combinations or the linework itself. I like pushing myself in new directions and I have been trying entirely new methods of painting recently (materials and approaches). I think the idea of keeping it fresh and inspired and furthering your own style can be useful in both graffiti and fine art, beyond that, I definitely don't have any self-imposed rules towards my work.

BBB: Can you name the top graffiti artists who've influenced your work and why?

POSER: The top artists that have influenced my work are mostly local, here are a few that immediately come to my mind:

Daser - His unbelievable scale, and variety was inspiring to say the least to a young writer such as myself. His consistency in quality and detail always surprised me and I consider him truly a style pioneer, an experimenter, and an innovator. I had the luck of drawing alongside him and talking occasionally over a few summers, and finally painting with him in 2010 and he taught me more than I could have ever asked for in those short sessions. I feel honoured to have been able to know him.

Evoke - His linework, colour combinations, and organic style have blown me away since I first viewed one of his pieces. His imagination and joy of nature / people / animals just bleeds through his work. I have nothing but respect for him and hope to paint with him someday soon.

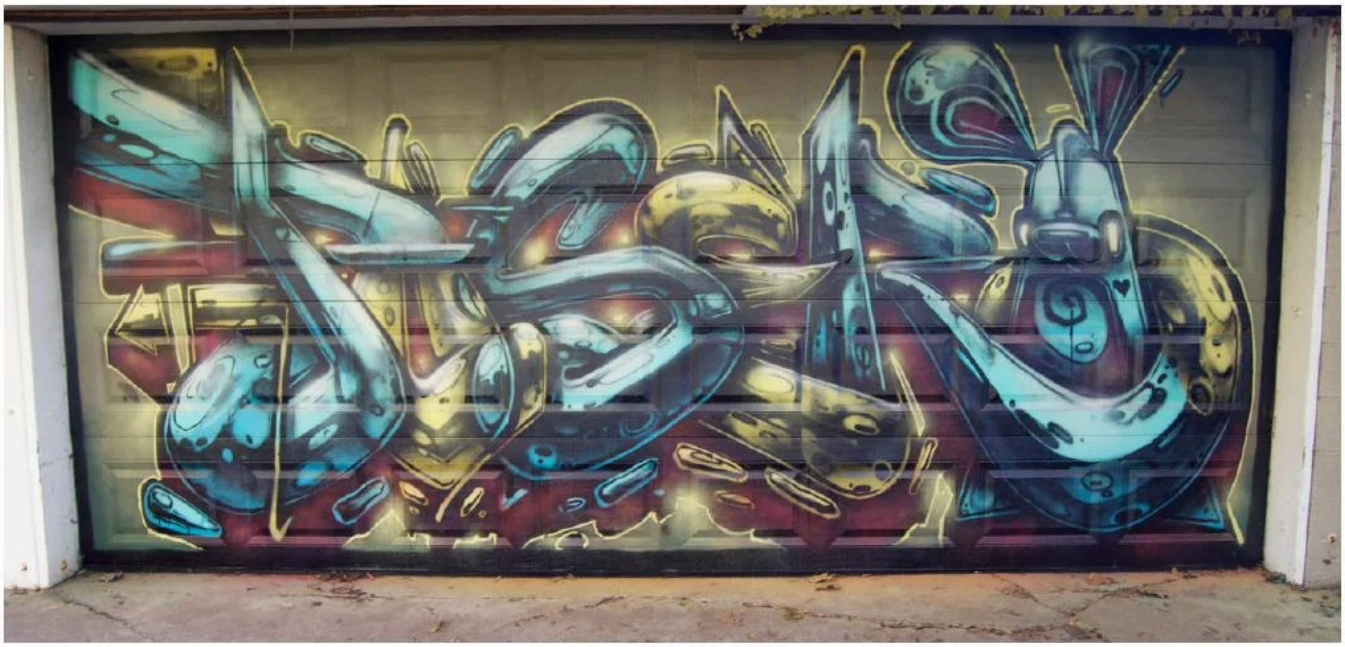
Berzerker - His style is beyond unique. He pioneered a style that I haven't seen before or since, and his execution of every piece puts most graff writers definitions of 'clean' to shame. Not to mention that in downtown Ottawa, in spots where people were getting booked for tags, he would show up and pull off a massive piece, perfectly clean top-to-bottom and beautifully colour coordinated. He had illegal pieces running downtown that would burn most legals. Berzerker's pieces stood out like few I've seen since, he is a huge influence to me and epitomizes the saying 'if you're going to do it, do it well'

Dems- The first wildstyle piece that I had ever seen was by Dems in 06 in Ottawa and it was unlike any art I had every seen before. That and a Sberk piece on the same wall were the two pieces that truly showed me that graffiti could be pushed in whatever direction you'd like, and inspired me to study graffiti. I am proud to call them both my friends these days and I still think their wildstyles are absurdly unique and a testament to their skills as writers. Plus Sberk's throw is still one of the wildest I've ever laid eyes on, he is definitely a steady influence of mine.

Art Child - I remember my first visit to Toronto as a young, aspiring, writer and while walking Queen Alleys one of Art Child's pieces visually stood out to me. His use of colour, his character work, and his all around refined style really stands out. I've always been a huge fan of his work and the energy behind it.

Bacon - What stands out to me most about Bacon is not only his supremely consistent quality but his huge variety of styles. He's consistently innovative and pushing his own work in new directions, which is never easy as an artist, and in turn he receives my utmost respect.

Kwest - Kwest's raw style, wild colours, and often overwhelming size has always impressed me. His work is some of the most interesting and visually stimulating



JANTE TERRI, STAY STRONG!
POSER ABIM

graffiti I've seen. It feels exciting, dangerous, and wild - what good graffiti is all about, in my opinion.

BBB: Graffiti is linked very closely to Hip-Hop, do you feel this is an accurate correlation or is the graffiti community more vast than just Hip-Hop/Rap?

POSER: I believe the graffiti community shares aesthetics with the other four elements on hip-hop in the basic ideas of: pushing a technical style, ideally a sharing community of like-minded peers, being genuine to yourself and your story, and sharing the joy of your work while doing it. I also believe that the graffiti community has a much wider range of people involved that very much still do their own thing while directly contributing to the community they are a part of, something that rap and a few of the other elements of hip-hop have lost to a certain degree. The graffiti scene still feels very communal and connected, I really hope that doesn't change, for the future generation's sake.

BBB: Any final thoughts, words or information for our readers?

POSER: I would like to say thank you, Bizarre Beyond Belief, and thank you, the reader, writer, or art enthusiast, for hearing me out!
Graffiti has brought me to a thousand places I never would have been otherwise and I'm very thankful to be a part of this community. The technical skill demonstrated by the artists working in graffiti gives me continuous inspiration and I'm honoured to be a part of this art form, it's one of the few good fights left to fight in my opinion. To everyone interested in painting, pay attention to the worthwhile advice and constructive criticism but otherwise stick to what you enjoy and turn it into your style. The world needs new ideas and those don't come from following in other's footsteps.

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JUSTIN BOWER

We've been well aware of Justin's work for a little while now and after posting him up a couple of times on our website we had to approach him for an interview. A painting style so unique and innovative that we could just sit and stare at each piece for hours. The compexity of his craft and clear dedication to the trade makes him one of the most exceptional artists we've had the pleasure to feature in our magazine.

BizarreBeyondBelief: As many children or young people draw and paint for fun or school, at what age did you choose this as a profession?

Justin Bower: I suppose you could say at the time I decided to get my degrees in art and philosophy; I made a choice in one way. Of course I had no idea what that meant at the time, I'm merely saying that at that moment I left no safety net below me, I resolutely decided to follow my curiosities in life regardless of monetary gain. From that point, it was always fueled by the study of the craft of painting, and even all forms of art and thought, and how this could be spun into a career. Which was a galactic endeavor indeed. I painted myself into a corner, to be corny. I just kept my expectations absurdly low and at the same time stupidly high.

BBB: Did you consider the difficulties of achieving success in this field or was it an obvious choice for you career?

JB: See above

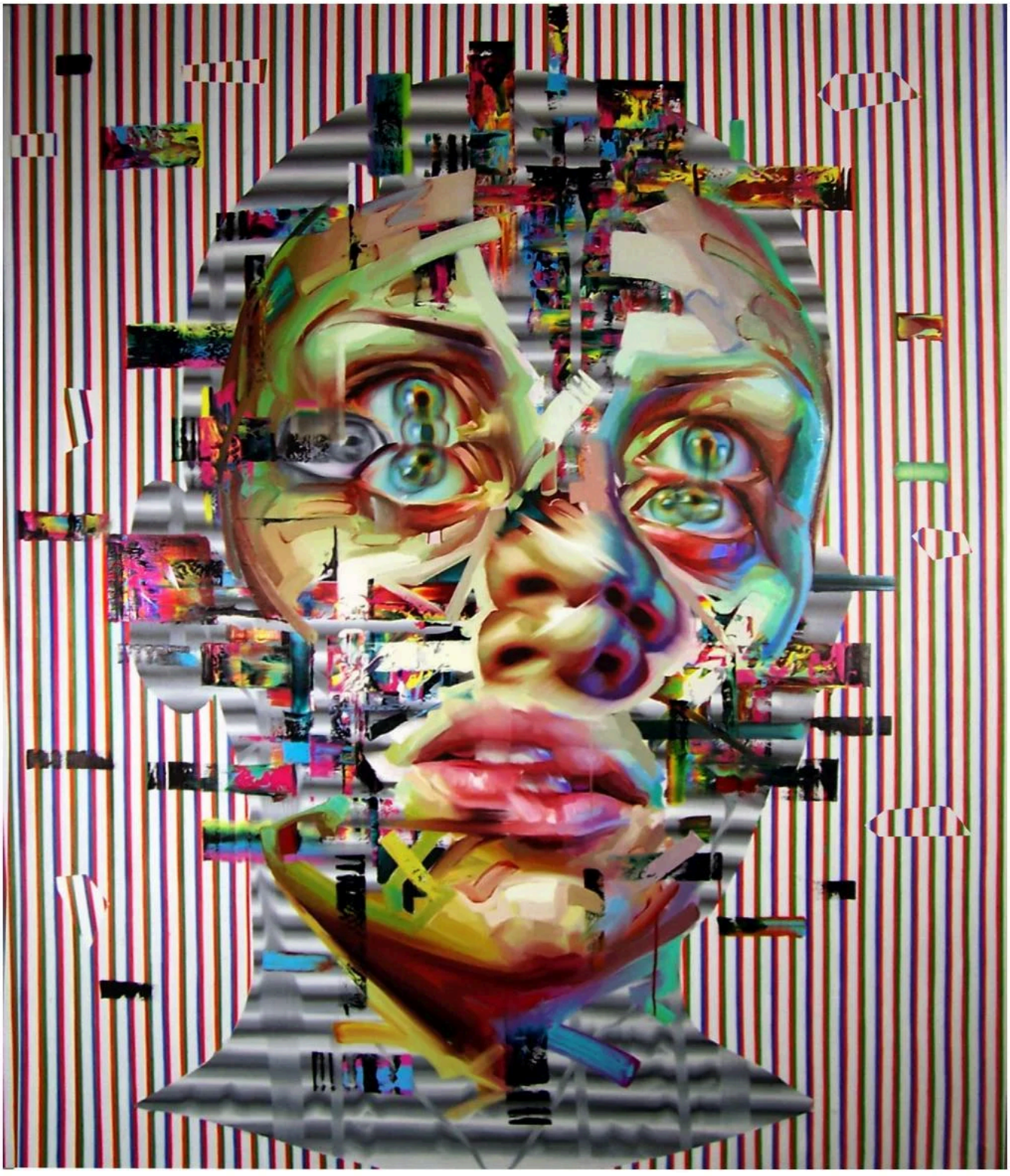
BBB: How would you describe the process of creating a painting from concept to completion?

JB: I start with an anonymous image I find appealing or in a certain androgynous state of in between. I then use photoshop as a digital sketchbook and manipulate the subject to my liking. After this I determine the nexus of interlocking special systems that become the context. From this point on the paint and chance determine the end result. I break-down and build up and leave the subject in a liminal state of becoming and disintegrating.

BBB: As an artist with an extensive amount of formal education, do you feel as if this was an integral step in your development as an artist?

JB: The experience with other artists in a concentrated and intense environment did seem to create a growth in my work. However, I saw that if you came into this situation too young or didn't create a personal work ethic or lack of direction...this didn't work out so well for those students. And it seems as the Graduate

IT'S LIKE PUSHING YOUR HAND INTO A JACK O' LANTERN AND PULLING THE PUMPKIN GUTS OUT AND THROWING IT INTO A FLAT STEEL WALL, & THEN EATING IT.



programs become more interested in optimal tuition every quarter, the institutional culture has eroded into something else. I do have to say the social connections can "create" a career as far as the power of which institutions and which professors teach there.

BBB: Would you say you have kept much of your educational indoctrination or have you strayed away from the teachings of your professors?

JB: I've kept all of it and have undoubtedly strayed.

BBB: Would you recommend higher art education to future aspiring artists?

JB: Not today...

BBB: How would you describe your work to a blind person?

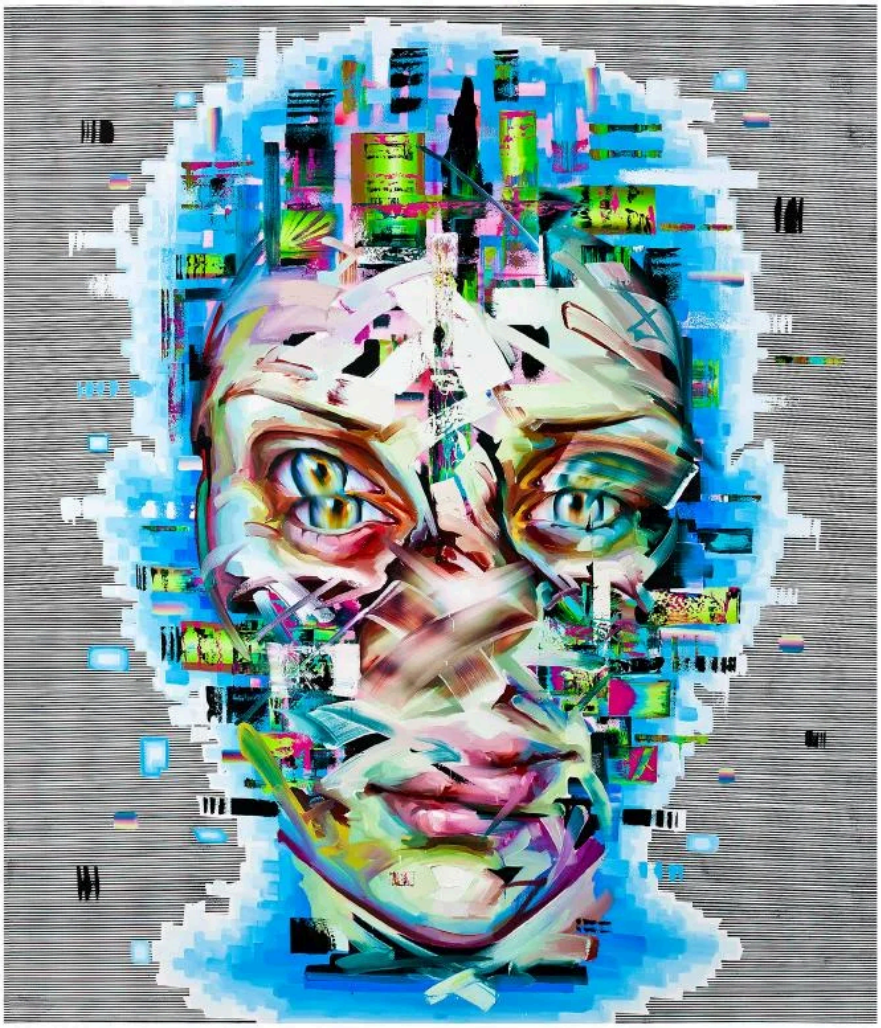
JB: It's like pushing your hand into a jack O' lantern and pulling the pumpkin guts out and throwing it into a flat steel wall, and then eating it.

BBB: Why do you feel the human face is the most important subject for your work?

JB: The face is the locus of humanity (or lack thereof), and my project starts with a destabilization of the idea of that humanity. In fact, we actually have a specific area in the brain, apart from everything else, that deals with facial recognition only. With that built in sensitivity, I also think any distortion of the face, the far grandeur and significant the effect it has on the viewer than any other part of the body. To have a standard to which all, at first glance, understand to be human and then to exercise a deviation upon it, helps to understand the subject in question. To know the human is to understand it as vanishing.

BBB: Determining when a painting is finished is difficult, how and when do you know when to put the brushes down?

JB: It's how you begin to think up a way to create life-or bring the event to life again. In my search of the technique to trap the subject in the world...the technique/object/subject becomes inseparable. When the painting is right on the edge of something happening, and it might seem as if it hits it's expanded apex, it



resolves itself. Completely incomplete.

BBB: Considering technologies and the internet have now shaped the way artists create and interact, how do you feel this has played a role in your work?

JB: It has given me a strand of many that becomes a crucible of ideas that is changing the way we define ourselves as humans. Technology is always already inside the subject today. In my paintings this technology infects the subject, moving seamlessly through the body, warping and displacing the integrity of its form. Technology has the effect of re-defining who we are. I see technology as manageable only in so far as we as autonomous/ free individuals make decisions for ourselves and the freedom to decide where we go with it. I also see technology as fallible. This fallibility in technology will ultimately manifest itself in the human form with each encroaching technological breakthrough.

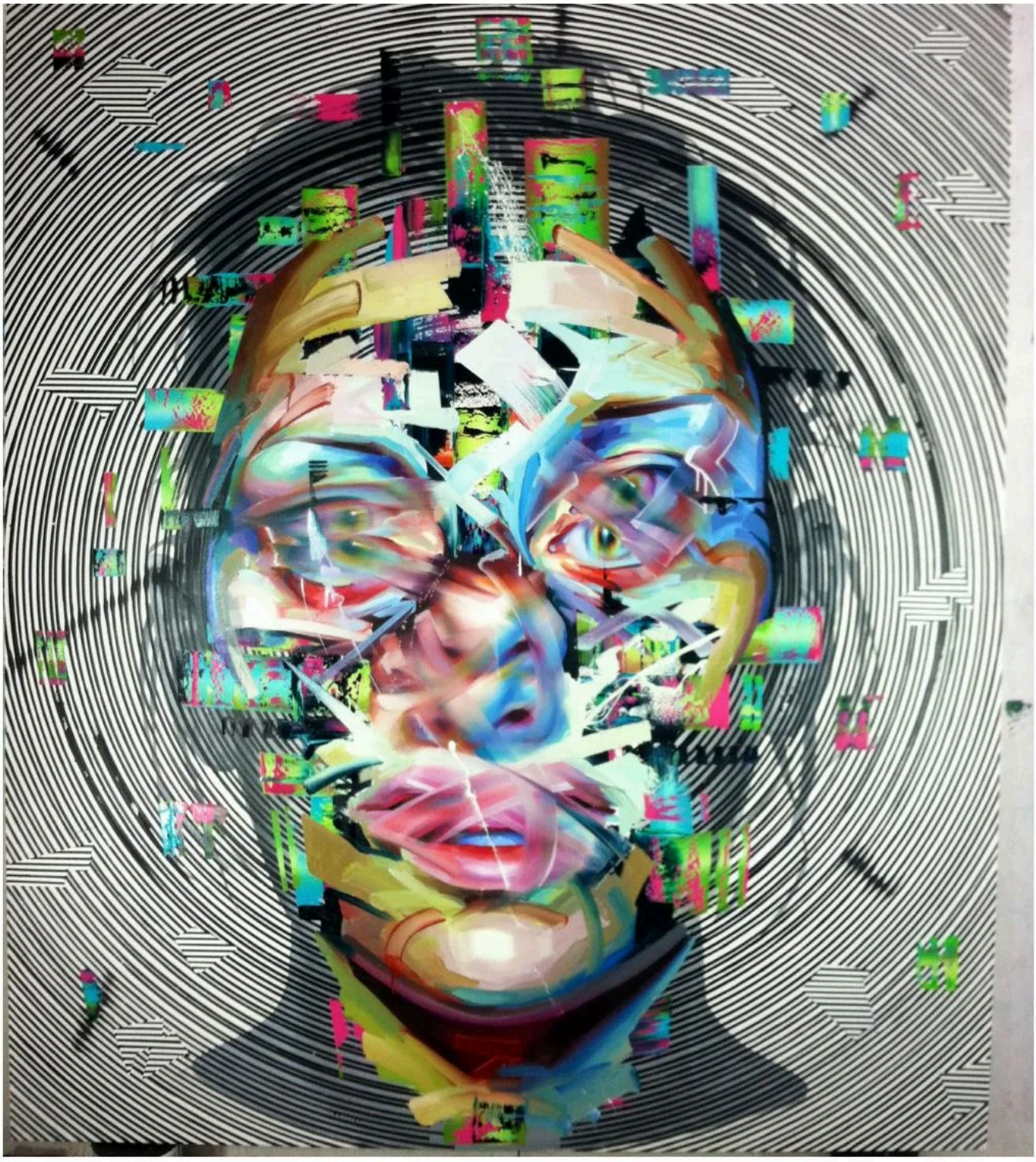
BBB:Do you feel websites and other social media are beneficial or detrimental to creative individuals?

JB: Beneficial....to those aware of control societies and the knowledge of the absence of agency in the human subject today.

BBB: Where does Justin Bower see himself in 5, 15 and 25 years?

Dead... revived and celebrated, exhilarated, immersed ...running with orange peel in my mouth in tomato gardens after my grandchildren.

WWW.JUSTINBOWER.COM



RUSTO

Through the wonders of social media we came across Rusto's work and we're extremely thankful for it. With a frest and clean graphic style of work, Rusto can crisp up any wall, tee-shirt or computer screen he touches. After getting a chance to talk with him further, we got to see not only what an amazing artist he is, but an amazing person and stand up dude.

DUNE

BizarreBeyondBelief: At what point in your life did you begin painting graffiti and what was it about the art form that fascinated you enough to do it?

RUSTO: I found myself doing graffiti when i was 14. I was already into art and majority of the people I hung around were doing it so it wasn't long before I began doing it, ha ha.

BBB: Choosing a name for graffiti artists is always extremely difficult, how did you get "Rusto1" to become the final decision for your alias?

RUSTO: I was given my name by an old friend of mine that wrote Veng. I had no clue what Rusto even meant at the time but I liked how the letters went together, so I stuck with it ever since.

BBB: Your work is extremely versatile and ranges from illustrations to murals to traditional graffiti, is there one you prefer over the other?

RUSTO: I enjoy graffiti over any of the other mediums handsdown. There is no better feeling then going out and spraying some walls with some homies and turning some shitty wall into something nice. It's free advertisement too!

BBB: How do you feel each medium helps or hinders your creative process for another?

RUSTO: It helps me learn a lot of different techniques from one another like choosing colors and creating

THERE IS NO BETTER FEELING THEN GOING OUT AND SPRAYING SOME WALLS

ALL CITY
BOMBERS
Crusty

FUCK
THE
POLICE!

techniques and I can adapt it to the other ya know. Like using a paint brush is a completely different feeling than using a can so of course you'll come across something you haven't done before with a brush and eventually try and learn how you can make that same detail with a spray can.

BBB: Your characters are funky and fun, where do you draw your inspiration from to create these personalities and scenarios?

RUSTO: I just draw them doing things that I am into and things that I see when im out and about like skating painting and kicking back smoking a few with some friends. Nothing to complicated ya know.

BBB: Are there any artists, crew members or individuals you enjoy collaborating with the most?

RUSTO: I enjoy painting with a lot of folks but I'd have to say my two crewmates Grem LNO and DAMB LNO SOR IBD. I've always enjoyed painting with the both of them. They're always down for missions and just don't give a fuck when it comes to getting some spots. Always a fun experience.

BBB: What is your take on graffiti artists moving from the street to the gallery setting?

RUSTO: I can't hate on it.I try and get shows as much as possible. It's nice to

show people that graffiti isn't just some bull-shit on a wall because it was done with spray paint and getting some side cash when you sell something is also cool.

BBB: Do you feel that the work is still credible or lose its value?

RUSTO: It's credible for sure. It takes talent to do this stuff. Wether it's painted on the street or a canvas it takes a lot of time to learn and you take a lot of risks trying to get good and be known.

BBB: If you're chilling out having a drawing session, what three albums would you be blasting on the stereo?

RUSTO: Lately I've been listening to a lot of Curtis Mayfield, Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Devin the Dude.

BBB: If painting and drawing didn't exist, what else could Rusto1 see himself doing career wise?

Skateboarding for sure.

WWW.RUSTO1.BIGCARTEL.COM

OH!

"THIS IS NOT A TOY"

The "This Is Not A Toy" exhibit at the Design Exchange in Toronot is a brilliant show, with special guest curator the one and only Pharrell Williams, This is the world's first exhibition featuring a collection of contemporary sculptures, figurines and artworks created by some of the largest names in art such as: Takashi Murakami, KAWS, FriendsWithYou, Coarse, Huck Gee, and Frank Kozik, to name a few.

OBE

PEP

OBE

SUPERSIZED
SUPERSIZED

SUPERSIZED

RUBIN415

Having Rubin415 in this issue was an unbelievable thrill for us. Seeing his work both in person and on the internet is a real treat. It's evident that RUBIN is an artist in every sense of the word. His technique, attention to detail and colour theory are as good as some of the most famous contemporary artists of the 20th century. After approaching him for an interview and seeing what a talented, dedicated and talented guy he is, we're honoured to have his beautiful craft grace the pages of BBB.

BizarreBeyondBelief: You began your journey with graffiti at an extremely young age, what first captivated you about this medium?

RUBIN: My first graffiti related memory is the movie "Beat Street". It had a huge impact on me. It was 1985 and I was nine years old. One of my best friends parents had all these cool movie channels that my parents couldn't afford and I remember us being excited for days after seeing the movie. The movie inspired me to the point where I started making tons of sketches. The main character REMO was the coolest guy I'd ever seen. He was wearing a US army jacket and I remember telling my parents that I want one too. They thought I had lost my mind. The Twisted Sister album "Come Out And Play" was also the coolest thing ever because the inner sleeve had these amazing Twister Sister Graffiti pieces. I think that was the first time I saw what would later become the classic sunset New York skyline fill-in. Since money was tight, I stole "Subway Art" from the school library and "Spraycan Art" from the local book store. These days I pay for my graffiti literature, ha ha.

BBB: Considering graffiti is a relatively new movement, what was the scene like in Gothenburg at the time you began?

RUBIN: Graffiti came to Sweden in 1984 and exploded after the broadcast of "Style Wars" on national Swedish television. The scene was quite small but there was so much energy. Graffiti also connected kids from different parts of the city, which was pretty unique.

BBB: How have you seen the graffiti scene from Sweden transform since

you first picked up a can?

RUBIN: The zero tolerance policy has affected graffiti tremendously throughout the years. It was implemented in the major cities like Gothenburg and Stockholm in he mid 90's. Gothenburg was always known for big colorful burners. Good technique and can control was always important, but everything changed after the zero tolerance policy set in. Security around the city became much tighter so everything started to get buffed. There was less time to paint and it became more about being seen than really pushing it in terms of craft and quality. The only - and I mean the only - even vaguely positive thing that has come out of zero tolerance is that it forced graffiti writers to get creative. If you wished to paint big you had to do it fast. It helped to retain the raw element of graffiti that I'm drawn to personally.

BBB: For many artists relocating to New York City is the dream move, do you feel this was an obvious choice for the development of your career?

RUBIN: It was definitely a necessary choice for my career because New York is where it all began and it's still the city of possibilities for ambitious artists and writers. I've always loved this city, ever since I started coming here in the late 90's. It's perfect for anyone who's willing to work hard and to put it all on the line. But it's also a sink or swim-kinda city in a way that you'll only understand after having lived here for a while.

BBB: What, if any, would you say are the major differences between the graffiti scene in New York as opposed to your native Gothenburg?

RUBIN: New York and Gothenburg both still have zero tolerance against graffiti, but the big difference is that here you can still have a dialogue about it, whereas in Sweden there's a lot more resistance. It's hard to compare Gothenburg and NYC, since they're so different, but like I mentioned, good craftmanship has always been very important in Gothenburg and I find it very useful here.

BBB: Beyond the cities of your past and present residence, you have painted all over the world, which are you favorite to paint?

RUBIN: It's hard to beat New York and there are so many cities where I haven't painted yet, but Copenhagen and Berlin are great. Helsinki has also been one of my favorite cities to paint and visit the last couple of years. I'm Finnish by heritage and still speak Finnish on a daily basis and I love going there. Helsinki got rid of their zero tolerance policy about five years ago and it changed the whole graffiti scene for the better.

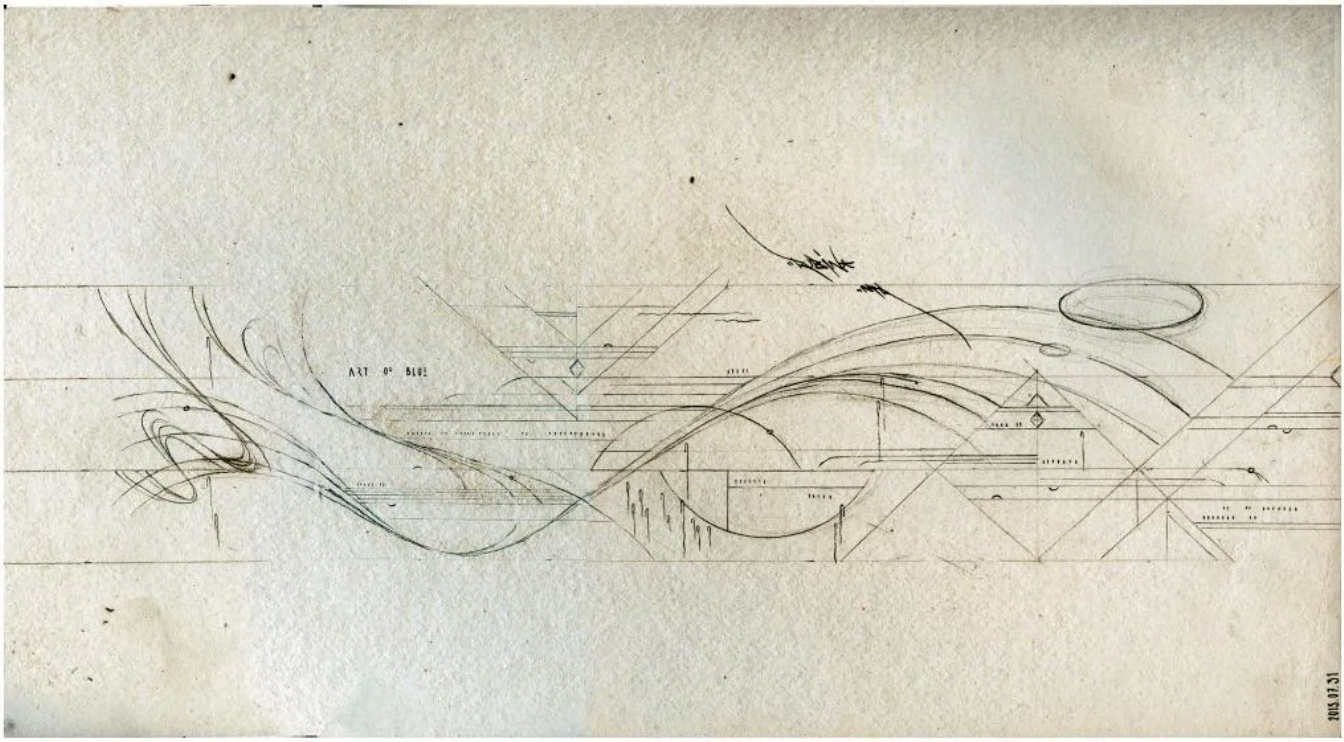
BBB: Have there been any cities you have been to uneasy to paint in?

I can usually make it work anywhere.

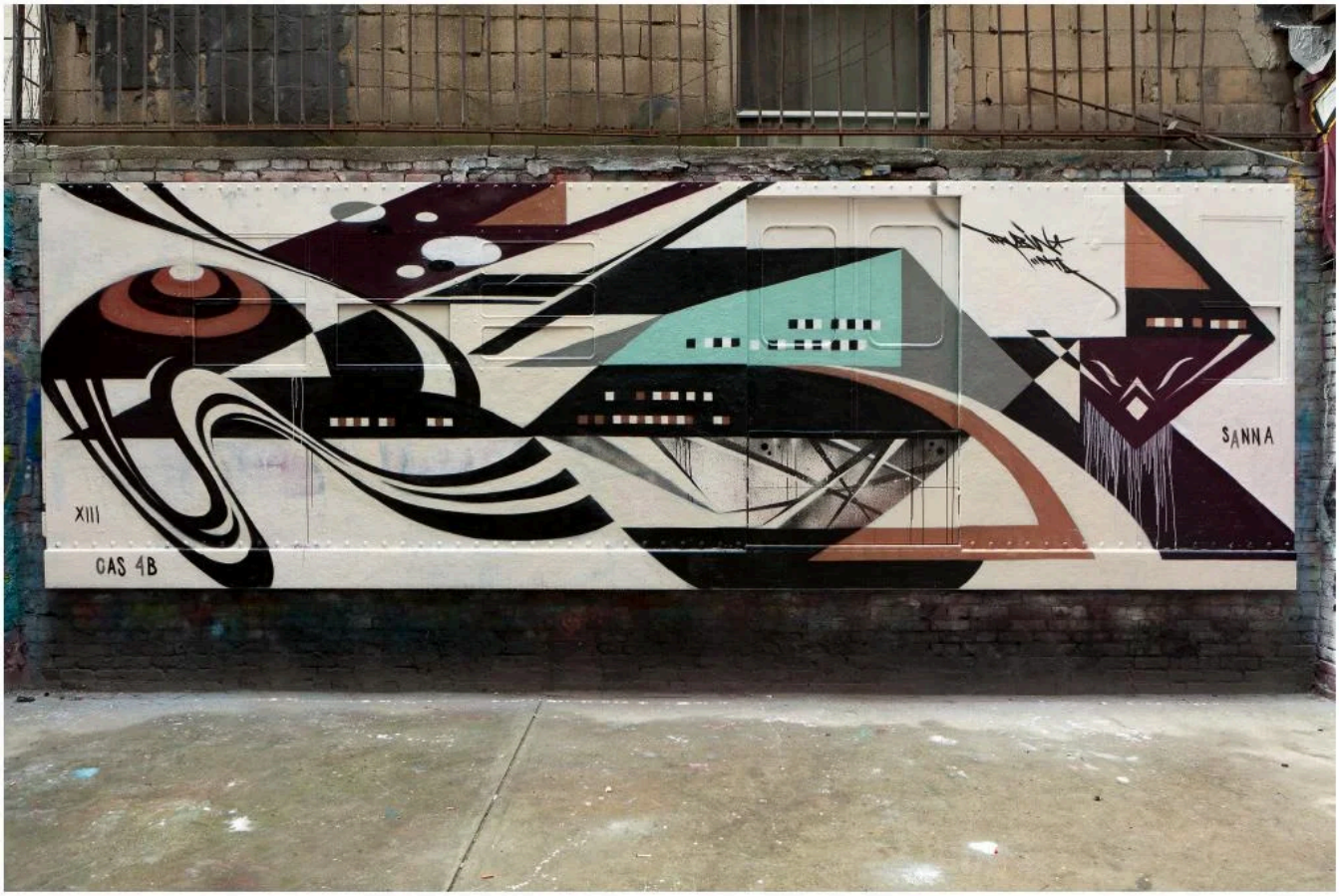
BBB Your work has evolved immensely over the years, what drove you to begin painting more abstract imagery than traditional graffiti letters?

RUBIN: A lot of the stuff I do now is an extension of what I already experimented with in the mid 90's. The transformation towards more abstract and geometrical pieces wasn't really planned, even though I've now realized that it had been simmering somewhere in there ever since I

EXIT



MY RULE OF THUMB IS THAT IF I FEEL THAT I HAVE TO COMPROMISE MY CREATIVITY OR INTEGRITY, I WON'T DO IT.



started painting. I think my sometimes almost minimalistic approach stems from my Scandinavian roots, it's almost like a connector between my current life here and my former life there.

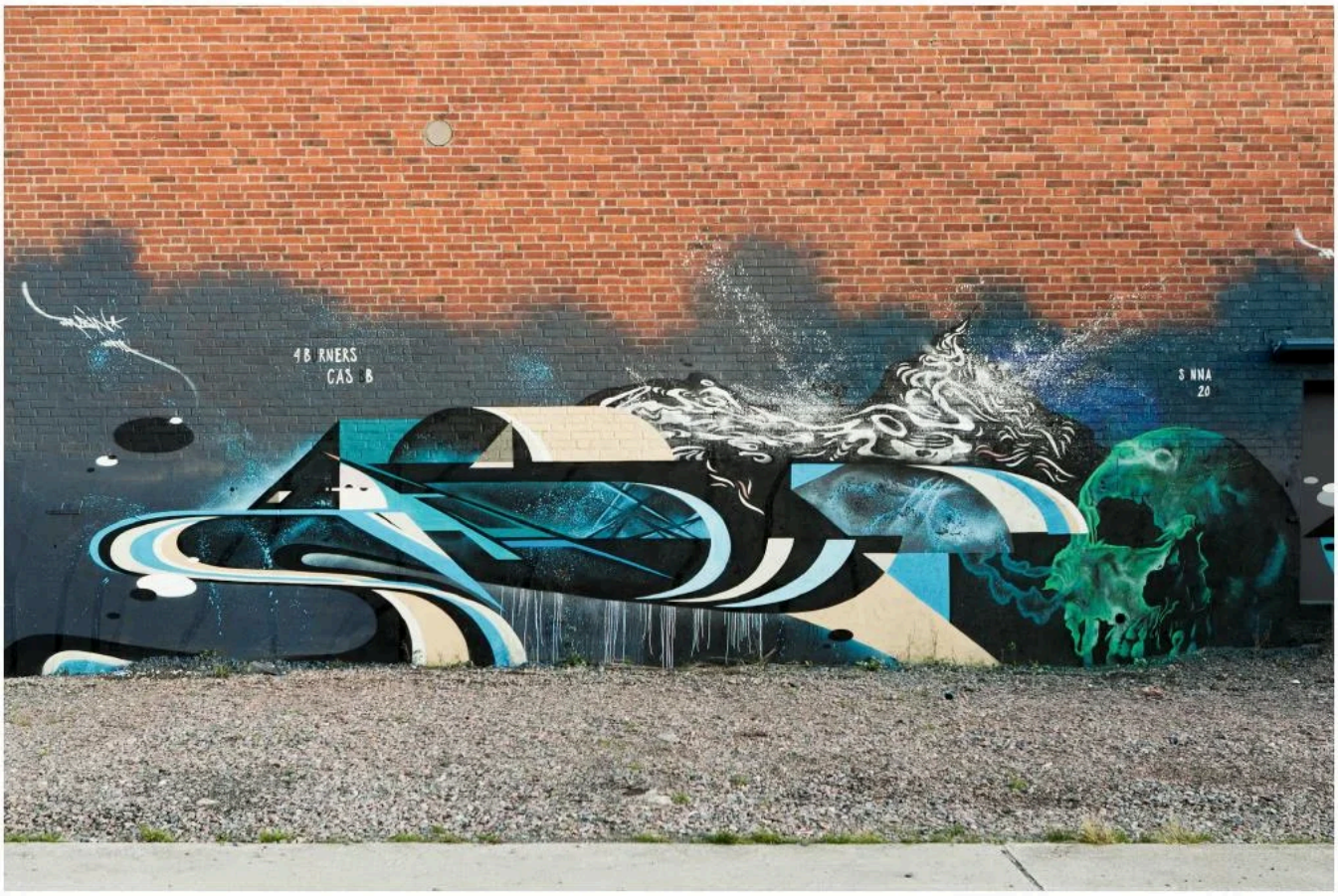
BBB: With the way graffiti has been evolving could it be said that traditional graffiti is a dying practice in this day and age?

RUBIN: I've seen a lot of trends come and go but writers will always return to the fundamentals of graffiti, which are the letters. That's exactly what I did when I started painting again in 2008 after taking a ten-year break. So no, I definitely don't think that traditional graffiti is a dying practice.

BBB: As an artist who has collaborated with huge corporations such as MTV, GAP and Heineken, how to do you feel working with these companies affects your creative process?

RUBIN: I have actually declined to more gigs than I have accepted. Working with huge corporations while maintaining your artistic integrity isn't always easy and my thumb rule is that if I feel that I have to compromise with my creativity or integrity, I won't do it. The pieces I have done in co-operation with some companies have been the exact same sketches I have drawn for my other walls, the only difference has been that the paint has been paid for and I've gotten cherry lifts or ladders shipped to me, instead of having to drag them there myself. I'm also old enough not to be naive. NYC is an expensive city and you need to work in order to put food on the table. But I do scrutinize every offer, for sure.

BBB: Have there been any other career options for you or has to achieve success in the arts always been your goal?



RUBIN: I come from a blue-collar working class background and even though I've always known that I'm more of a creative personality, I've tried the nine to five thing. I built a small business back in Sweden, worked night and day for years in order to secure an income and once we were afloat and doing pretty okay, everything just seemed wrong. Like the Truman show. I'm sure there are many others out there with similar thoughts but who are too afraid to let go, because you have to pay the rent and put food on the table. It took me quite a while to realize that this is what I - not only have to, but also need - to do, and it's not for success or money. I had a way more stable and secure life before moving here for sure, but I wouldn't change anything!

BBB: Where does Rubin415 see himself both individually and career-wise in 15 years?

Me and my wife always joke that we don't even know where we're gonna be next week, but hopefully I'll be living and working in New York and spending the summers in Lapland, where we have an old cabin in the middle of nowhere. I hope I can keep doing what I'm doing today and that I will have enough room to grow and evolve artistically. That's pretty much it.

WWW.RUBIN415.COM

OPENYOURWORLD

WINNIE TRUONG

As a Toronto based magazine, we've been well aware of Winnie's work for quite a while and watched it develop. There's not much else to be said about Winnie Truong that you haven't heard before. Winnie's style is unique and breathtaking that in a studio or gallery they stand out like crazy. Winnie has been a true work-horse these days by exhibiting all over the world exhibiting and being featured in numerous exceptional publications, we're thankful and honoured she gave us the time to chat and get to know her and her craft.

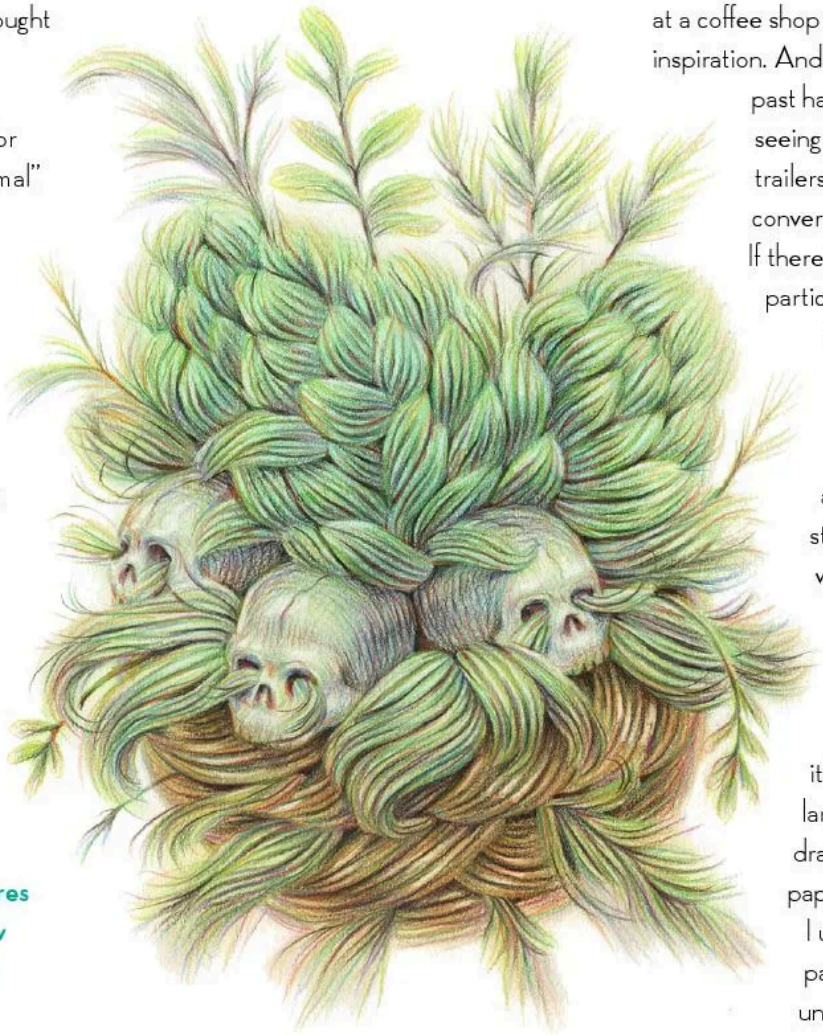
SURREAL QUALITIES EMERGE WHEN HAIR BEHAVES UNCONVENTIONALLY

BBB: What first intrigued you about the arts and what drove you to choose it as a career path?

Winnie Truong: As a kid, I had always kept sketchbooks and made doodles when I was young, but thought very little of it. It wasn't until I applied and was accepted to high school for the arts that had any "formal" training and exposure to different forms of art that encouraged me to keep creating. it was there that I started to develop working in a studio among like minded art kids I became aware of the possibility that art could be an interest to be pursued academically and professionally in the real world.

BBB: How do you feel being an artist based in Toronto compares to artists that live in New York, London or Paris?

WT: I can only speak from my experience and say that while Toronto is a very small community compared to those other places, and although we don't draw hordes of young artists into the city quite the way New York does... Toronto is still is a hub of excitement for me; there are so many great artists and arts venues that I don't feel that we are isolated or out of touch with the global art scene. Ultimately, New York is a short Porter trip away, and the Internet has been an amazing tool that has allowed me to form global connections despite being a part of a specific art community.



BBB: Your drawings are extremely intricate, can you describe the approach a piece from concept to completion?

WT: For the most part, I begin with the doodles and sketches I make when I'm bored on the phone, or at a coffee shop as a way to collect inspiration. And inspiration in the past has been anything from seeing clips of B movie trailers or overhearing a conversation on the subway. If there is something I'm particularly drawn to, it becomes a postcard-sized study; a bit more accomplished in detail and colour and the sketch. The studies allow me see what groupings of subjects and color work when I plan out series. If I really like something, it becomes a much larger work that will draw directly onto the paper at the size desired. I use coloured chalk pastels to create an under drawing and the rest of it is colored pencils; just different coloured strokes cross hatched to create the effect of optical mixing.

BBB: When did you develop your current aesthetic and how did it come about with the techniques you use?

WT: Up until my final year of my undergrad in the fall of 2010, I was still painting. My first few years in school were spent on setting out exploring new mediums, practicing painting and surviving brutal critiques. It wasn't really in my fourth and last year that I abandoned painting, and approached a drawing practice beyond the sketchbook that I really became confident with my vision as an artist. How I work on a large scale now I think is just a natural transition from the way I've always doodled; lots of practice with portraiture and cross hatching in pen. I learned a bit of colour theory in school, but most of the colour relationships I've developed in my drawings developed intuitively and with much trial and error.

BBB: What is it about drawing that fascinates you as opposed to sculpture or painting?

WT: For me, using pencil crayons really reminds me of my child hood and I think that it evokes the same nostalgia for many people viewing the work. Something I think about often is that drawing itself is traditionally used as preliminary for painting and sculpture, never an end in itself. What excites me about contemporary drawing is taking that delicate and immediate line work beyond a sketchbook page and translating it into something more monumental, yet fragile.

BBB: Your work appears to draw from a very surreal and dreamlike aesthetic, where do you draw you inspiration from?

WT: I am inspired a lot by trends in beauty and in fashion and I take a way a lot of their posturing and expressions as tropes in my own work. Hair continues to fascinate me as it is a naturally occurring thing on our bodies that can be styled and adorn as expression of class, culture, gender, and even personality, and especially at its extremes. In my own work it's an extension of personality as well, and the surreal qualities emerge when hair behaves unconventionally: in my work hair may be overpowering the character to the extent that it becomes the sole subject.

BBB: As an artist who attended an arts institution, do you feel this was necessary for you development as an artist & would you recommend to aspiring artists to attend a post-secondary institution?

WT: I think that it was a worthwhile journey for me coming into the program right out of high school. It was a necessary path for me to take in finding out what I kind of art I wanted to make, how to do it and developing the work ethic to match. A lot of great opportunities has also come out of working so closely in a community of peers and arts professionals, so from a networking perspective it's been an invaluable experience as well. I think unless you're an absolute genius or purist when it comes to creating art, going to a post-secondary institution is a great way to begin developing as an artist. It's also just plain fun a lot of the time.

BBB: If you were stranded on a desert island and only could have three things for the rest of your existence (not art related), what would they be?

My husband, an iphone and Wifi.

BBB: You've got a big commission due and you're spending countless hours in the studio, what top 5 albums would you have on repeat to help you get through the night?

WT: Cupid Deluxe by Blood Orange, Kaputt by Destroyer, Pet Sounds by The Beach Boys, Audiobook of Tina Fey's Bossy Pants and Much Dance 1997.

BBB: Where does Winnie Truong see herself in 2015, 2020 and 2030?

Hopefully making better art as each year goes by, travelling more and with a few international residencies under my belt, and to do it all with full head of hair and all of my own teeth. And ideally the above would apply to all time intervals as well.

WWW.WINNIETRUONG.COM

ENDONE
Oxycodone hydrochloride 5 mg tablets
013592
CONTROLLED DRU
POSSESSION WITHOUT AUTHORITY I
KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDR
ENDONE
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20 TABLETS
AUST R 14945
SEALED FOR YOUR PROTECTION
SIGMA
ENDONE
970962XM
197K-2
ENDONE
Oxycodone hydrochlorid
ENDONE
Oxycodone hydrochlori
DOSAGE: As directed by your physicia
This medication may cause drowsiness.
If affected do not drive a vehicle or
operate machinery. Avoid alcohol.
Store below 30˚C. Contains Lactose
Gluten free. Do not use if foil is bro
or if seal is broken or missing.
Consumer Medicine Informatio
available from your Pharmacis
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www.sigmaco.com.au/prescri

BEN FROST

We know we say this a lot, but Ben Frost is truly one of our largest influences. As a magazine run by artists, we draw, paint and sculpt like many of the artists we showcase and Ben Frost helped some of us develop our craft. In other words, to say having Ben Frost interview for BBB is an understatement. A prolific artist with a gutsy attitude, Frost creates brilliant and thought-provoking pop-art. Beyond his paintings, Frost has some of the most inspiring and riveting words we've read to date. You'll undoubtedly enjoy this feature on a multitude of levels.

ART SUCKS
FOOL
AMERICAN
BUSINESS
DIE
?
BLAM
1¢

BizarreBeyondBelief: As an Australian artist, how did you find the country's environment either helped or hindered you in your development as an artist?

Ben Frost: I think it's true for anybody with ambition - that they must at some point make the decision on whether to stay in the place they grew up in and create a new forum or to relocate to where things are already happening. Australia, because of its location, is physically forced to support and create its own sub-cultures - unlike Europe or Canada for example where there is always the option/temptation to just cross the border and be in a completely different country.
In that sense, I think Australia has a very distinct feeling of disconnection from the rest of the world, which serves to not only promote artistic solidarity but a restless obsession for all things 'foreign'. It's a love/hate relationship between Australia and the rest of the world, that as an artist I can't resolve until I've visited and re-visited all the far-off places that I could only read about or watch on television as a young child.

BBB: Considering Australia is a relatively remote country, how difficult was it to achieve success internationally?

BF: I think it's a little easier now for artists to work on a more global scale than it was when I started to exhibit internationally 6 or 7 years ago. The internet and the online artistic community has been so important in supporting artists and creating new opportunities for them around the world.
I've been living in Canada now for the last 2 years, and that has been helpful in it's proximity to the US and Europe for exhibitions and making connections. It has been difficult for sure, but it's an ongoing process and I'm having loads of fun.

BBB: Could you describe your approach to a work from concept to completion?

BF: I spend a lot of time gathering and collecting images from the internet, magazines and books bought from Ebay or sourcing things to paint onto from various places like thrift stores. The images are scanned and processed on my computer into black and white or greyscale, and then I print the images onto clear acetate sheets that I can then use for my overhead projector. I can fit about 10 or so images onto a letter-size acetate

sheet and I must have about 1000 sheets that I can look through when I'm painting - so I've now accumulated quite a large 'image bank' to work from. From there I just begin with an image that I like, project it, paint it, and then layer new images next to the first image so that they 'interact' and create the intended meanings I'm looking for. The projection process allows me to see elements of the composition in real time on my canvas before I paint it, which helps with scale and also how colors and drips can either be blocked out or allowed to come through. Also because I have a lot of diverse images on each acetate sheet, there's a fair amount of chance and randomness that comes into play. This gives the juxtapositions a surreal and sublime quality that opens new directions and thought processes - almost as if the paintings are making themselves.

BBB: With much of your work being politically driven, what is your take on the corporate impact on society?

BF: Our society is as obsessed with its own self-destruction as it is in complaining about whose fault it is. We're moving chairs around on the Titanic - blaming corporations while we increase our consumption of the products they supply us with. I have an increasingly nihilistic perspective on the contradictory and delusional lifestyles most of us lead, and it's this dystopia that I'm trying to depict in my artwork. I don't pretend to offer any solutions, but I'm trying to present this hyper-materialistic, media-driven 'reality' as I see it, in an attempt to change some people's perceptions.

BBB: Is some of your work more satirical leaning or are you attacking many of the companies you contextualize?

BF: In a small way, I can take back some of their power when I can interact and subvert the endless stream of logos, icons and mascots that companies so lovingly force down our throats. It's a means of questioning their authority and asking the viewer to think twice about what they've already been indoctrinated to think about a product or company.

BBB: In a world completely over-saturated with advertising, how do

Milky
KAPOW!
Only 25¢

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD"
CAN'T SLEEP
CLOWNS WILL EAT ME
DON'T STRUGGLE, AFTER ALL... NOBODY LIVES FOREVER!
JKLMNOPQR
EXIT

Wi Fi
Your
money
back
if not
EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
IDEAL
LARGE SIZE

you feel this has played a role in your creative process?

BF: Advertising is so aggressive and intrusive in our lives, that it's nearly impossible to go an hour of your day without some sales pitch, billboard or logo forced into your field of vision. It is our contemporary environment and these are the 'landscapes' that I paint.

BBB: Whether is be positive or negative (or both), how do you feel globalization is affecting the world?

BF: Globalization is how humans have evolved to more effectively destroy its host. Now we can consume more natural resources from a distance and create better Facebook marketing campaigns to make us not feel guilty that we're doing it. Its so ironic that we cut down entire rainforests in South America and use the resources to make things to sell on Amazon.com.
I don't think globalization is completely negative, but I do think that there is some horrific things happening in the world that most people are choosing - or at least told to ignore.

BBB: On that note, because globalization and technologies such as the internet are intertwining the world, how do you feel this is playing a role in the arts?

BF: I think the connectivity has brought many of the sub-genres together and increasingly the media's evolving disinterest in editorial content has brought images of art further into the mainstream. Street art is a good example of this - it's colorful, to the point and edgy enough to teeter between a consumer product and the underground. Our increasing 'dumbing down' by Facebook and Buzzfeed has in many ways helped the raw immediacy of art in a now image-hungry society.

BBB: With the immense growth of social media, would you say it is now an more desirable time to be an artist or is the pool to large to choose from?

I was lucky to have started making art at a time when artists were only just beginning to get their own websites, so there was far less competition for me back then. My first folio website was up in 1999, and I remember back then searching on Alta Vista for 'art' or 'pop art' as a search term and there really wasn't anything that came up. So that gave me an advantage in a lot of ways.
I think ultimately it's about the quality of the work, and despite the immense

KRAFT
Kraft Dinner
ORIGI
PASTA
No-Drain Microwave Directions:
Stove Top Directions:
Sensible Solution CHEESE SAUCE
CLASSIC CHEESE SAUCE
Makes 4 servings, 3/4 cup (175 mL) each.
PÂTES
Sensible Solution
225 g
MACARONI & CHEESE
MACARONI ET FROMAGE

KRAFT
Kraft Dinner
ORIGINAL
MICROWAVE DIRECTIONS
STOVE TOP DIRECTIONS
TIP
For a creamier taste, use 3 tbsp. butter and 1/4 cup 2% milk to make the Cheese Sauce.
Makes 4 servings, 3/4 cup each.
AU MICRO-ONDES
225 g
MACARONI & CHEESE / MACARONI ET FROMAGE

KRAFT
Kraft Dinner
MICROWAVE DIRECTIONS
STOVE
AU MICRO-ONDES
SUR LA CUISINIÈRE
CONSEIL
Pour obtenir un gout plus cremeux, preparez la sauce au fromage en utilisant 3 c. a soupe de beurre et 1/4 de tasse de lait 2 %.
Donne 4 portions de 3/4 de tasse chacune.
225 g

KRAFT
Kraft Dinner
THREE CHEESE
PÂTES
SAUCE AU FROMAGE
Sauce classique : AJOUTER aux pâtes 3 c. à soupe (45 ml) de beurre ou de margarine, 1/4 tasse (50 ml) de lait et le mélange pour sauce au fromage. Mélanger pour bien enrober les pâtes.
Donne 4 portions de 2/3 tasse (150 ml) chacune.
Makes 4 servings, 2/3 cup (150 mL) each.

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$59.95
$79
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I WAS SHOT IN THE BRAIN
UPPER DECKERS
3
4
2
1
L
R
PayDay
10¢
5¢
ALL TRUE
CAN I EAT YOU?
SPECIAL
HORROR WITHOUT A HEAD
TAKE THIS COUPON TO YOUR STORE

amount of artists now out there promoting themselves online, social media has a tendency to bring the most interesting things to the forefront.

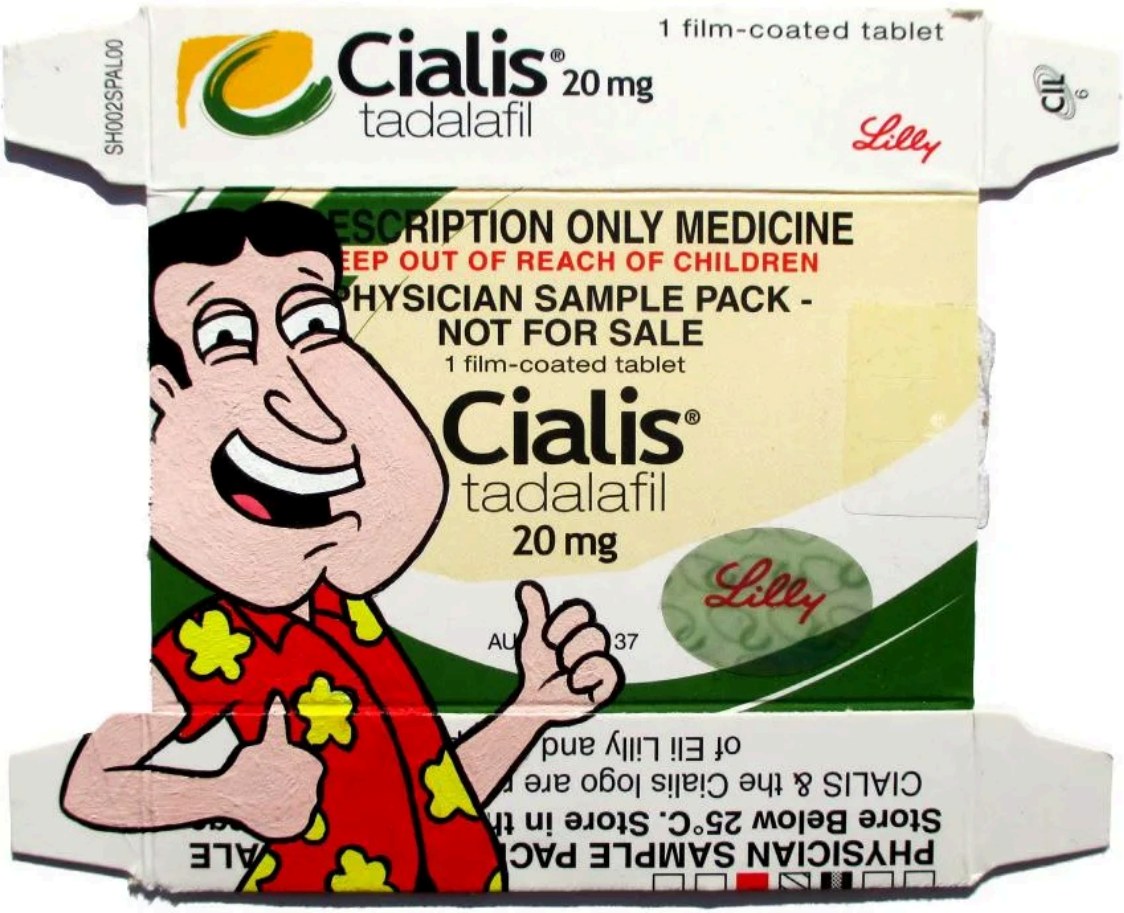
BBB: Do you feel that artists may be inclined to use the internet to take work from artists they are inspired by than to create work from their own ideas?

BF: There is a lot of derivative work going around, but I think all art forms at their core have always evolved through inspiration from other artists. It's our Post-Modern human condition.

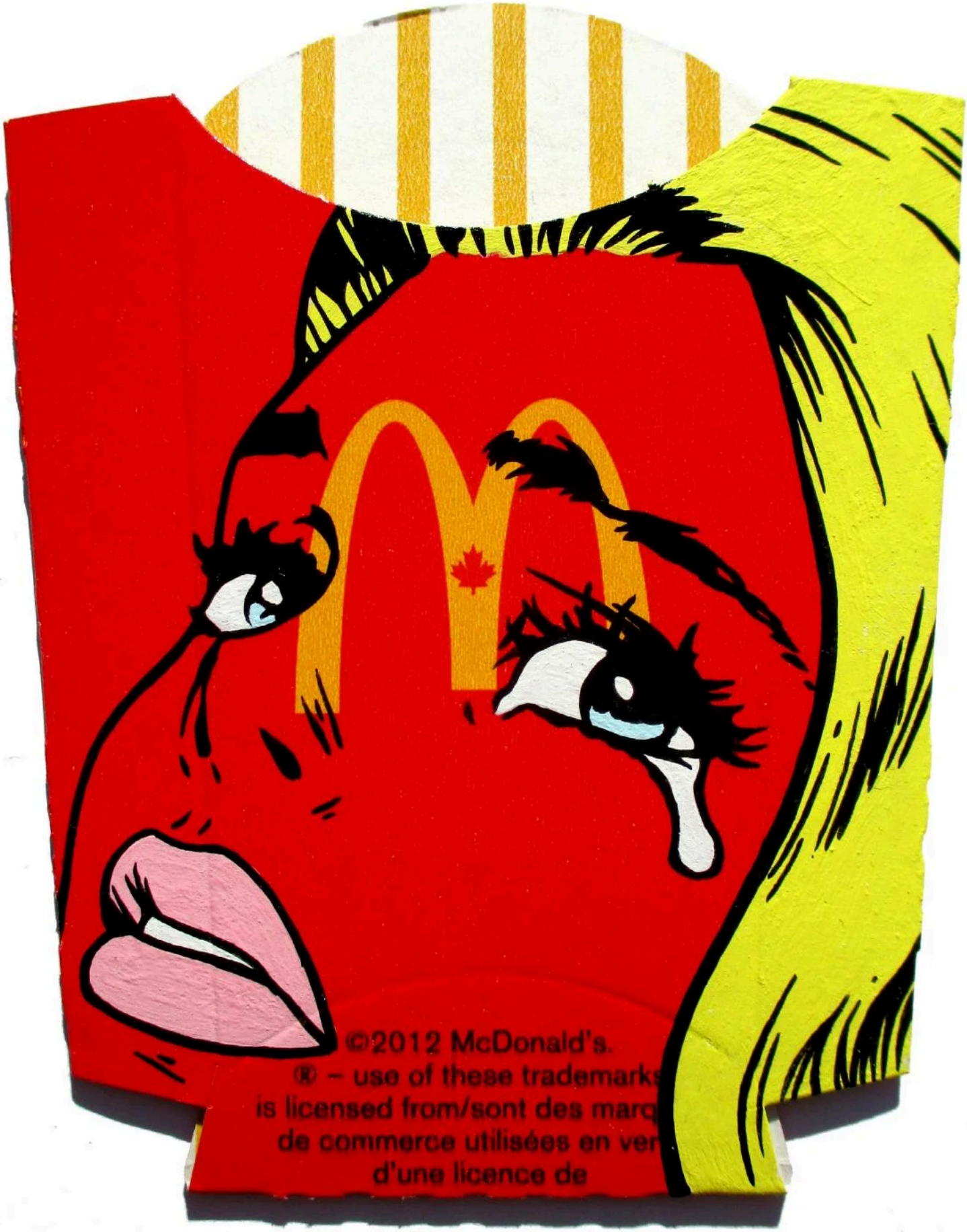
BBB: As an artist who is busy traveling around the world painting and exhibiting, are there any new projects or events our readers be on the look out for from Ben Frost?

BF: I'm doing a solo exhibition in Los Angeles in June at Soze Gallery, then another one in the UK at No Walls gallery in August. After that I'm going to take a rest.

WWW.BENFROSTISDEAD.COM



OUR SOCIETY IS AS OBSESSED WITH ITS OWN SELF-DESTRUCTION AS IT IS IN COMPLAINING ABOUT WHOSE FAULT IT IS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